

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
March 10, 2010
Christine Kovacs

Esteemed Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I respectfully submit this testimony regarding Funding for Prime Time House and other services for Persons with Mental Illness.

MY STORY

My name is Christine Kovacs. I was born and attended schools in Norwalk. I graduated from UConn with a degree in Economics and have lived in Torrington for 7 years.

Throughout my life I had difficulty functioning and trouble interacting socially. I always blamed myself. I thought it was just my personality and I just did the best I could. I could not keep a job suited to my intelligence. Upon college graduation I became a speechwriter for the Government of Indonesia at its Mission to the United Nations. After one year there I was falling into a paralyzing feeling which I would now interpret as depression. I had to leave that job and for most of my life have worked as a tradeswoman / typographer. Even that was difficult and I sought counseling a number of times, but no one saw my illness. I remained undiagnosed, frightened and unhappy.

I was fully self-supporting until age 55 when I went into my worst Depression ever and was suicidal. I was almost ready to take that last step but a great friend insisted I come to live with her in the Northwest Corner because it was about the best place in the country for help for the mentally ill. She was right.

I was still suicidal but I did go the Charlotte Hungerford Hospital and was diagnosed as bipolar. I was still terribly depressed and had no social interactions. They placed me in the Partial Hospital program and we began to seek the medications that would help me.

I don't need to tell you this is serious stuff.

Now I am not saying that the medical attention did not help but in all truth I AM ALIVE BECAUSE OF PRIME TIME HOUSE.

My friend knew I needed not to be alone. Then my psychiatrist gave me the referral to become a member of Prime Time House.

I still was almost mute (as I had been during some of my college years), immobile and having suicidal ideation. But the members of Prime Time House understood because they had been there. They offered love, support and understanding as friend to friend. Over the next weeks I became able to talk and interact. Over the next months I was trying to keep busy and participated in Clubhouse activities – clearing the lunch tables, etc.

Within a few years I could take on more responsibility and made a commitment to be a Member Driver two days a week. All this culminated in my having a job for the past 20 mos. as a driver for ARC of the Farmington Valley which serves intellectually disabled persons. No need to tell you how having a job has changed my life. I am still bipolar, of course, but now I can live with my illness. I have confidence and pride. Am able to socialize with others, improve my income and be happy. It is almost impossible to describe how Prime Time does what it does. We mentally ill are Prime Time House. We sustain Prime Time House. We are there for each other in every way. This place is the hidden pearl in a sea of mental illness. There is nothing else like it.

You will probably get literature to explain what ICCD is and how it makes Prime Time House different than any other clubhouse. I have always felt that if the world ran by the ICCD Standards, the whole world would function on love and be productive and responsible to each other.

I truly thank you and the State of Connecticut for all you have done for us, the mentally ill. I now ask that you keep supporting Prime Time House because **YOU ARE TRULY SAVING LIVES.**

Thank you,

Christine Kovacs